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Preserving the future: engaging non governmental organisations and actors in sustainable environmental development

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ABSTRACT

“The objective of sustainable development is explicitly mentioned in the preamble of the agreement establishing the WTO.

Furthermore, the only areas where the parties envision specific commitments—the reduction or elimination of tariffs and nontariff barriers to environmental goods and services, in particular fisheries subsidies—belong in the traditional market access part of the negotiations.

The text in the Doha Declaration concerning the negotiations on the relationship between WTO and the multilateral environmental agreements is extremely cautious and will hardly produce any substantial results or any new commitments.” (The Economist, 2006:11)

Amongst other aims and objectives which will be highlighted in the volume, this volume aims to contribute to the literature on the preservation of the environment and sustainable development primarily by recommending cost effective means, whereby sustainable development can be facilitated by non governmental organisations and actors.

sustainable development; environment; non governmental organisations; trade agreements; environmental standards; carbon offsetting

Preserving the Future: Engaging Non Governmental Organisations and Actors in Sustainable Environmental Development

Marianne Ojo and Helene Delhay¹

Introduction

According to a report by the Economist (2006:53), the practice of offsetting carbon emissions is not only increasing, but also becoming popular amongst various groups which include charities, non governmental organisations, firms, community groups, and international agencies such as the World Bank. It defines offsets as a process which occurs where “one individual or organization pays another to reduce the emission of green house gases (methane and carbon dioxide accounting for the greater degree of the entire composition) on their behalf.” However, the practice of offsets are also opposed – particularly in relation to their levels of effectiveness. In particular, forestry offsets – considered to be highly controversial, have been subjected to independent standards which have been developed by NGOs, to determine whether they really reduce carbon emissions (2006:54).

Objectives of the Volume

As highlighted, this volume aims to contribute to the literature on the preservation of the environment and sustainable development. It will do so by:

- Highlighting why the engagement of non governmental organisations and actors is essential and necessary in efforts aimed at facilitating sustainable development.
- Recommending other means, in addition to those indicated (for example, offsetting of greenhouse gases), whereby sustainable development can be facilitated by non governmental organisations and actors.
- More specifically, it aims to propose more effective measures whereby non governmental actors and organization can be efficiently engaged in reducing carbon emissions, as well as
- To accentuate the relationships between environmental agreements – as for a for facilitating goals of sustainable development – as well as trade relations, and finally,
- Propose regulations and standards whereby sustainability can be initiated and achieved.

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² “Since the start of the WTO in 1995, an increasing number of member countries, often as a result of a lack of resources, have turned to specialized NGOs for assistance in undertaking research and preparing negotiating positions on specific issues. Through closer bilateral cooperation with delegations, the NGOs have succeeded in influencing the Doha agenda more effectively than would have been possible through established institutional channels like the WTO Secretariat.

Two areas where input from the NGOs has been crucial are the negotiations on fisheries subsidies and the environment chapter. “ (The Economist, 2006:19)

Selected References

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